



The Neighbors' Gardening Circular

Information for your neighborhood from the people at
Seattle Department of Transportation, Urban Forestry



Spring 2004



Announcing the 2004 Seattle Streetside Garden Contest!

Seattle Department of Transportation is pleased to hold our third Streetside Garden Contest this year! This contest is designed to help us acknowledge our outstanding stewards and the unsung heroes of streetside beautification. Competition is easy – just let us know you're interested, and the judges will stop by and check your garden out! No essays to write or meetings to attend.

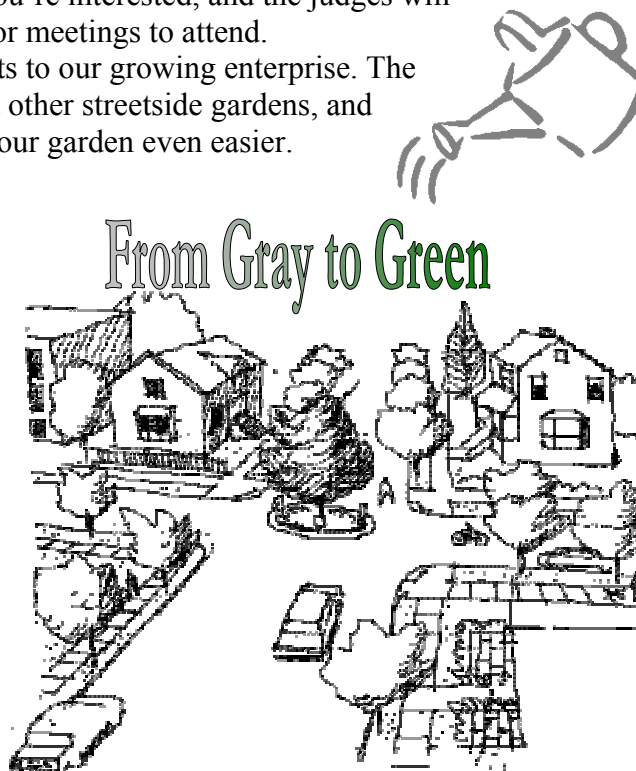
This year we've made two exciting improvements to our growing enterprise. The contest has been expanded to include planting strips and other streetside gardens, and we've put up an online entry form to make submitting your garden even easier.

Primary Judging Criteria:

- ☞ Effective use of color and foliage
- ☞ Seasonal interest
- ☞ Quality of maintenance and plant health, good gardening practices, meet SDOT height requirements
- ☞ Unique design and personality
- ☞ Plant selection: drought tolerance, pest/disease resistance, no invasives

For detailed information on how the contestants will be judged and to fill out an online entry form, visit

www.seattle.gov/transportation/trafficcircles.htm
or call us at (206) 684-0809.



★ Traffic Circle Pass ★

Retired from being a traffic circle steward or know others who are interested in helping out? Please pass along this newsletter. Any information you can provide to new traffic circle stewards is invaluable guidance in continued support for your community.

Pests: Who do we really need to worry about, and what can you do?

Spring is here, and as we come out of our winter hibernation, so do many of our less-than-favorite invertebrate friends. It can be frustrating to lose your daffodils to slugs or see your struggling tree covered in tent caterpillars. Many people waste time and money on ineffective pesticide application, mainly because the incorrect product is used or applied at the wrong time (there is usually only a narrow time frame to apply, varying with the pest, often before the problem is even apparent). However, here are some tips on how to deal with these common garden pests.



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Memorials

As you may know, traffic circles reduce collisions by 90%. Generally speaking, if you have a traffic calming device in your neighborhood, it's likely that neighbors were concerned about speeding cars and collisions. Traffic calming devices can also offer a great opportunity to beautify the intersection with landscaping. Occasionally, neighbors have contacted us about using the device to place a special remembrance of someone that has passed away and who had a particular impact on the community. While we would like to accommodate your requests, we must keep the following points in mind when evaluating them:

- Traffic calming devices and planting strips are in the public right-of-way. Proposals must be appropriate for public spaces – avoid using overly religious symbols or phrases.
- Safety is our biggest concern, so we must keep visibility in mind. Do not attach anything to the post of the reflective sign, and keep it low (preferably inset into the soil).
- Remember that the fire department does not allow any large objects in these areas, this includes rocks and statues.

Please contact us with your memorial plans. This way we can give you tips on ways to prevent vandalism, mark it in our database, and make sure it will not create any safety hazards.

April is Arbor Month!

Celebrate by giving your tree to some TLC, like pruning out any dead wood and clearing weeds and grass away from the roots. Visit <http://www.treelink.org/> to find out more!



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Please submit articles, photos, and artwork to the editors at the above address. Please pass this newsletter on to your friends and neighbors.

Permits are required for planting, pruning, or removing trees in the planting strip (space between sidewalk and street). For details and applications, call 684-7649 or visit <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/arborist.htm>.

Classes and Events

Plant Exchanges:

Central Area Community Plant Exchange: Saturday April 24th 11am – 3pm in the Casey Family Program parking lot, 1123 23rd Ave. Come with or without plants to share!

Green Elephant Plant Exchange: Saturday March 27th, visit <http://members.gardenweb.com/members/firevicar> for more info.

SPU Classes -FREE-

Visit http://www.savingwater.org/docs/class_list.pdf for more classes

Creating a Carefree Garden in the Northwest: Sunday April 4th, 2-4pm at Molbak's 13625 NE 175th

Using Great Plants for Tough Places: Saturday April 17th, 2:30-4pm at Swanson's 9701 15th Ave NW

Designing a Mediterranean Garden: Sunday April 18th, 11:00am-12:00pm at City People's Garden Store, 2939 E. Madison St

Choosing Perfect Plants for Northwest Small Gardens: Saturday April 10, 2004 10:00 - 11:30am at Piriformis Nursery & Garden Art, 1051 N. 35th St; Saturday, April 24, 2004 10:00 - 11:30am at Magnolia Garden Center, 3213 W. Smith St; Sunday, April 25, 2004 2:00 - 3:30pm at Classic Nursery, 12526 Avondale Rd NE, Redmond

Plant Amnesty Classes -- For information and registration, call (206) 783-9813.

Tree Pruning: Sunday, May 9, 2004 10am - 12pm at Sand Point Magnuson Park

How to Prune and Renovate the Overgrown Garden: Sunday, June 13, 2004 10am - 12pm at Sand Point Magnuson Park



Common Horticultural Myths

1) Transplanting myths

The spring planting season is upon us, so keep these common misconceptions in mind when you're in the garden. (Or better yet, forget them altogether!)

- "Pop and drop." When installing containerized plants, it's easy to just dig a hole and drop the plant in, but it's not usually a good idea. Roots circling the pot will not stop circling once the pot is gone – they'll continue the same path unless YOU move them. Rough up the root ball as much as you can. Be especially good about this with trees and shrubs, because they need their roots spread out for stability.
- "Keep the container soil." The soil in containers is usually rich in organic matter, so it would seem like a good idea to keep it with the new plant to help give it a boost. Unfortunately, the roots won't leave this yummy soil for the crummy stuff elsewhere, so the roots don't spread out and you'll have to water way more often!
- "Stake new trees." Staking trees keeps them from falling over. Improper staking replaces the support systems trees naturally have. As such, they put their energy into growing taller instead of sturdier. By not staking a tree if it can support itself, we encourage it to grow a large healthy root system (this equals less watering for you in the long run).
- "Amend the soil with organic material when installing new plants."

Organic material decomposes, and as it does so, it shrinks. If organic matter is added to a planting hole, in a few years the hole will sink below the surrounding soil. Water and trash will collect there, and that's no fun. Instead, add organic matter to the top as mulch after you've planted everything, and let the nutrients seep down.



- "Prune the crown to balance out the loss of roots." Plants respond to pruning by putting out more growth. If a plant is pruned when transplanted, it will spend its energy on above-ground growth instead of establishing new roots. For more information about pruning, visit <http://www.isa-arbor.com>

2) Native plants are best

Native plants have evolved to suit our climate nicely. They have survived millions of years with droughty summers, excessively wet winters, and with each other. It makes sense to plant native species to create a more sustainable landscape, reduce maintenance needs, and even provide additional habitat for our native wildlife.

What our native species did *not* evolve with, however, is humans and cities. The city environment is drastically different than the mature conifer forests that once existed here. Construction activities change the pH, nutrient load, and structure of the soil, both at our homes and in traffic calming devices. Locations near the street also experience more wind, more pollution, more heat and cold from the pavement, more compaction, and more drought than our homes, let alone the shaded woodlands that most of our natives are fond of.

It is difficult to find plants native to our area that can survive in the street right-of-way. But with a little extra care, it is possible. If it is a sustainable or minimum maintenance garden that you are looking for, however, select species that evolved in conditions that more similarly reflect our city environment.

3) If it's green, it must be good

It can be hard work to keep plants happy in the middle of a road, so when something *volunteers* to live there, it's tempting to let it be. However, many weeds are harmful to people and our native ecosystems. Traffic calming devices are installed to create a safer neighborhood, and many weeds grow too tall or bushy and can create hazardous conditions. See page 4 for more detailed information on some specific weeds common to streetside gardens.

For more information on common horticultural myths, visit the Center for Urban Horticulture or Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott's web page at <http://faculty.washington.edu/lindacs/>

Tree Jokes!

What do you get when you cross a pine tree and a pig?

A Porky pine!

What's the saddest kind of tree?

A weeping willow!

How can you recognize a dogwood tree?

You can tell by its bark!

How do you get a one-armed arborist out of a tree?

Wave.

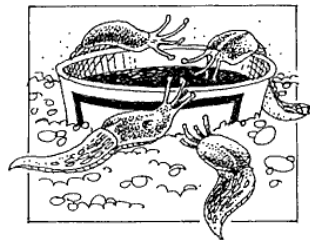
Spring Checklist

- ☐ Plant fall bulbs
- ☐ Plant/divide perennials
- ☐ Catch those spring weeds
- ☐ There's still time to cut back perennials and grasses
- ☐ Mulch
- ☐ Enter the 2004 Seattle Streetside Garden Contest!

Pests: Continued from Page 1

Slugs

The tried and true beer trap – a little cheap beer in a tuna can or bottle – often works well. The earlier in the



season you trap, the fewer there are to deal with. If slugs are still a problem, try using iron phosphate pellets, which are safe for people, pets, and even earthworms. Remember, those little black or brown

beetles (predacious ground beetles) are your best friend, so encourage them to stick around!

Aphids

Many plants are susceptible to aphid infestation, so your best bet to control these critters is to choose plants that aren't. However, if you've got 'em,



the good news is that aphids won't kill anything. They just make everything under the plant a little sticky. If they

really bother you, try spraying them off with a hose (if it's possible). There's not much more you can do but encourage ladybugs, especially their scary-looking larvae (see picture), to visit.

Did you know?

Earwigs are good mothers! They care for their newly hatched young, leading them to good places to forage, much like mother ducks.

In addition to the occasional nibble on your garden plants, earwigs eat aphids and decaying plant matter.

Although the pinchers on their abdomen look scary, they're mostly just for show and cannot break the skin.

Rhododendron root weevil

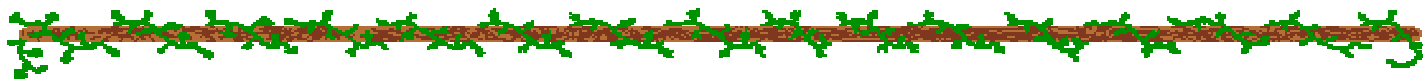
Are your Rhododendron or Azalea leaves notched along the edges? This is caused by the adult Rhododendron root weevil. More significant than the aesthetic problem above ground, the larvae are below the soil munching away on the roots! Again, your best bet is to choose resistant varieties, such as our highly recommended low-growing, drought tolerant, 'PJM' compacta. Tanglefoot can be slathered on the trunk to keep the adults off, but beware of problems below ground.

Tent caterpillar & webworm

Although unsightly, tent caterpillars are rarely harmful to infested trees. The best way to control these pests is to remove the nests. Cut out the infested branch, put it in a garbage bag, and stomp on it! Otherwise, they'll just crawl right out. If you can't reach the nest, do your best to disrupt it with a broom handle and keep an eye out for gray or brown egg sacks encircling branches in the fall.



It's easier and cheaper, not to mention safer, to handle pest problems the old fashioned way. By maintaining landscapes in the street right-of-way, we help do our part to make nature at home in the city. By planting a diversity of disease and pest resistant plants, and utilizing just a pinch of tolerance, we can sit back and enjoy a better way to beautiful!



Weed Spotlight

The street right-of-way is often home to many different weeds. High volumes of people and vehicles convey and deposit seeds all over the city. Sometimes, we are tempted to leave weeds in place because it can be difficult to get anything to survive in the middle of a road. However, not everything that is green is good, and these weeds can do a lot of harm if left unchecked.

Scotch Broom

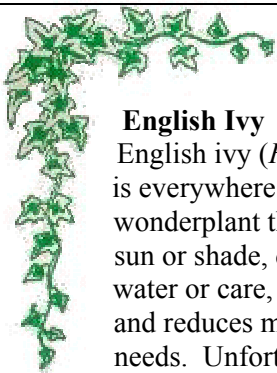
Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is most commonly seen along freeway corridors -- those bushes covered with allergenic yellow flowers. It's also pretty common in abandoned traffic circles. Just like English ivy, Scotch broom is an ornamental plant gone wild. An aggressive nature and prolific seed production make this species one to control early, if possible. Once established near a road, vehicle tires



can disperse seeds far and wide.

Young plants can be pulled out fairly easily – be sure to get the roots. Older plants may need to be cut back several times before they die. Try cutting them to the ground when drought conditions are at their maximum (July or August) to increase your chances of killing it. Contact us if you'd like to borrow a weed wrench to remove pesky bushes.

Continued on Page 4: Weeds



English Ivy

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is everywhere. It's the wonderplant that tolerates sun or shade, doesn't need water or care, stabilizes soil and reduces maintenance needs. Unfortunately, it also smothers trees, infiltrates natural areas, and it just won't die!! Ivy is dispersed by birds or by cuttings, and ends up in areas where we can't keep an eye on it. It forms a thick mat that eventually eliminates the understory, and then climbs up and strangles the trees. The extra weight causes tree branches to break easily, especially during winter snows. Ivy mats also provide a haven for rats and other unsavory creatures.

Because it is so resilient, English Ivy is difficult to remove. Cut climbing ivy at waist height on every tree, that will prevent it from adding any more weight to it and stop the smothering process, the vines will eventually fall off on their own. Ivy also tends to fruit on climbing vines, so killing this part will help slow dispersal. The waxy leaves make most herbicides ineffective, so the best way to control this nuisance is by mowing or hand-pulling. Remember that it can sprout from cuttings, so keep track of all the pieces and get as much of the roots as possible!

For more information and alternatives to ivy, check out www.ivyout.org.

For more information about noxious weeds, visit the King County Noxious Weed Control Program website at: <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/index.htm>

Purple loosestrife

Purple loosestrife is a noxious weed, and Washington State requires its removal. Purple loosestrife and its cousin, Garden loosestrife, should never be kept in a garden.



Thistles

There are many thistle species that are on the state noxious weed list. Remove any that you find!



Butterfly bush

Although beautiful and fragrant, gardener beware of the Butterfly bush (*Buddleia spp.*). This aggressive seeder costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to control every year, as it invades forests throughout the region. It will also pop up elsewhere in your yard, as well as your neighbor's. These shrubs easily find their way to traffic calming devices and roadsides, where they cause significant visibility problems.

Be sure to remove seedlings from your traffic calming device and elsewhere near the intersection. If you maintain a Butterfly bush in your own yard, be sure to deadhead flowers to prevent seeds from dispersing. Check out our new and improved plant list, and consider growing one of the many other plants that attract butterflies.



Himalayan blackberry

Our native Trailing blackberry is often overshadowed by the more aggressive Himalayan variety (*Rubus discolor*), which we commonly see in empty lots and along roadsides. The Himalayan blackberry can form a dense, prickly thicket that is very unpleasant to remove. Spread by birds or cuttings, these invaders are easiest to remove when they're small. Even when they are more mature, small areas like traffic circles are still best cleared by hand (use thick gloves!). For larger areas, repeated mowing will often make removal more manageable.

Herb robert

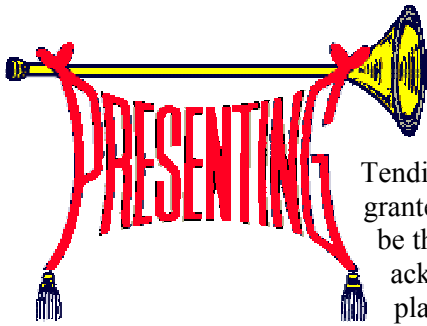
Often called "Stinky Bob", *Geranium Robertianum* is another common weed in traffic calming devices. In natural areas, Herb Robert displaces native species within the understory. In addition to its distinctive odor, Herb Robert releases compounds that prevent other plants from growing nearby. Fortunately, removal is as simple as pulling them out.



SPU to the Rescue!

Thank you to Seattle Public Utilities for making this issue of the Neighbors' Gardening Circular possible! The current budget crunch has put a strain on our steward support resources. SPU has generously offered to help us print this issue of the newsletter, as well as become a sponsor of the upcoming streetside garden contest!

SPU has some really great information that is useful to gardeners! Check out their website or take a free class (see page 2). www.savingwater.org or www.seattle.gov/util



Years of Service

Many stewards have been with their traffic calming device since its construction, while others have stepped up to the challenge, often after many years of neglect.

Tending a garden in or near a street is difficult to say the least, and is often taken for granted by neighbors and reckless drivers alike. However, without you Seattle would not be the emerald city we know today. As such, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge some of you who have stuck with us through the years, providing the plants and elbow grease that makes our city so beautiful. Every spring issue of our newsletter will feature the anniversary of our dedicated stewards. If you notice your name missing, or in the wrong category, please contact us so we can update our database! Thank you!

5 Years of Service:

Shirley Soggie, Mary Laza, Leighton Chan, Mary Ann Urlacher, Brenda Swidler, Leslie Jacobs, Sheila Anderson, Phillip Patterson, Kent Wills, Christine Trautman, Dawn Wulf, DeDe Boughton, Irene Wall

10 Years of Service:

Gerald Kane, Ron Cole, Dial/Albright, Don Edge, Abby Meyers, Ron Mickelson, Phil Quinn, John Redlich, Ron Mickelson, Joie Gallon, Jay Decker, Ken Mingear, Cathy Leon, Betsy Fett, Bob Bent, Peg Anderson

15 Years of Service

Luanne Billings, Joni Veatch

20+ Years of Service

Paul Heyne, Becky McCullough, Willie Bell Brown, Dick Bonnelle, Lise Leistner

If you would like to receive this newsletter by **email**, or if you are changing your email address, please contact Melissa Brown at MelissaLee.Brown@Seattle.gov.

Free Wood Chips at Magnuson
Bring a truck and fill it up!
(Map not to scale.)

